



Raider Review



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U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Brent Hunt

Lending a hand... Sgt. Gerardo Garcia, a wheeled mechanic working on the 1st STB, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.'s Personal Security Detachment helps out setting up the playground at the Al Shrooq Primary and Secondary School in Taji, Iraq, April 19. The Iraqi army, civil affairs, Multi-National Division - Baghdad Soldiers and kids from the school pitched in to put the playground together from donated items from both Iraq and the U.S. See story below.

Iraqi children, Coalition open school playground

By Sgt. 1st Class Brent Hunt
Editor, Raider Review

A new playground for the Al Shrooq Primary and Secondary School in Taji, Iraq, opened April 19 for the children of the school with the combined effort of

the school's students, the Iraqi army and Coalition forces who put the yard of fun together.

The \$15,000 jungle gym was donated by BigToys, a U.S. manufacturer of playground equipment, the gravel, sand and concrete were donated by a local gravel company and the sweat to build the project

was donated by everyone involved.

"With the local merchants donating the gravel, sand, concrete and rebar to the local guy who volunteered to move the gravel with his dump truck, it's just been a great team effort," said Maj. Jeff Pugh, civil affairs officer with (go to page 12, school) —

Raider Soldiers continue great work in all areas of Iraqi operation

By Col. James Pasquarette
Commander, 1st BCT

Soldiers of the Raider Brigade: time for another update.

We continue to make great progress here in Iraq – especially with regard to growing Iraqi Security Forces capability (our primary task). As I write this, the 9th Division is conducting a command post exercise that will validate their ability to eventually assume some of our area of operation. Additionally, the 2nd Brigade, 9th Division will soon assume some of 7-10 Cav's area of operation. This is thanks in large part to our great Soldiers that are



providing Military Transition Team (MiTT) support to 2/9 Bde – along with the Lancers of 7-10 Cav. that have provided 2/9 Bde. with a great partnership experience. Thanks to all that have had something to do with this important mission.

There are other great things going on in our area worth noting. First, the Soldiers of the 1st Special Troops Battalion continues to impress me with their ability to do so many unique and critical tasks so well. Whether it's escorting the EOD Soldiers to dispose of IEDs, the UAV platoon providing critical ISR coverage, the Soldiers manning the Buffalo and RG-31's for counter-IED operations, the MPs supporting the task forces in battlespace, the security detachment providing escort for CA teams, or the Soldiers from Alpha and Bravo Companies providing superb intel and signal support, the Phoenix battalion has excelled. I want to also thank the brigade staff Soldiers for what they have done to support the operation

here in Iraq. Your efforts often go unappreciated – but I notice them and thank you for what you have done to date.

Second, the Packhorse Battalion – like 1st STB – has been providing superb support to the brigade combat team outside of what doctrine dictates what a support battalion can provide. Two areas of note are the Soldiers working in the Division Holding Area Annex and the Security Platoon. Both sets of Soldiers are providing a critical capability to the brigade. Additionally, the 4th Support Battalion continues to provide first rate medical care, maintenance and supply support.

Third, the Straight Arrows of 4-42 FA have picked up some battlespace recently and are making things happen in a positive way in their part of Iraq. Lt. Col. Newman and his team are operating across all lines of operation here – and remained disciplined professionals. Additionally, their efforts in support of securing Camp (go to page 5, key)

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The greatest Army in the world

By Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Wells
Command Sergeant Major, 1st BCT

When I was a 1SG at Fort Campbell, I attended a Cyclic

Training Briefing with the 101st's CG (MG Clarke). We reviewed all our training objectives for the next cycle and started talking about reenlistment.

MG Clarke talked about a Soldier's decision to stay in the military, and he relayed a story about himself. CPT Clarke, at the time, was an Infantry company commander on TDY trip. He was in his Class "A"s at LaGuardia Airport waiting for his



plane to arrive when a young businessman, in his early thirties sat beside him. They struck up a conversation and discovered they had a lot in common. Both were college graduates, had a family and were from the same hometown. The businessman was on a recruiting trip, and interested in what a company commander did, how he managed his own budget and what it took to lead.

Before CPT Clarke knew it, the young businessman was trying to recruit him to leave the Army. The businessman asked how much money he was making, his medical coverage and any other perks the Army offered. After he told him, the man laughed and immediately offered CPT Clarke three times more money to leave the military. He also offered a fully paid medical and dental plan for him and his family along with unlimited use of a company vehicle. He promised CPT Clarke he wouldn't have to leave his family for long

"business trips" like the Army does.

CPT Clarke listened to the man give his recruiting pitch, and then politely declined the offer. The businessman even offered a \$10,000 signing bonus and a promise of fast, upward mobility. So now the businessman is totally confused and he asked what is it about the Army that'll make him refuse.

CPT Clarke said, "When I go home and see my children, they once asked me what I do for a living. I told them their daddy is an infantryman in the greatest Army in the world. You on the other hand, can only tell your kids daddy makes soap for a living." With that, the conversation was over.

It's the quality of work, not the quality of your life, that's making a difference over here in Iraq or anyplace else where there's a Soldier, Marine, Sailor or Airman. Be as proud of your service in this Army as I am of you. I wouldn't trade this life for all the soap in the world.

There is no greater sacrifice...

Sgt. Joseph Anthony Blanco
Trp. B, 7th Sqdn., 10th Cav. Regt.
July 7, 1980 - April 11, 2006



Spc. James Francis Costello III
Trp. B, 7th Sqdn., 10th Cav. Regt.
June 28, 1978 - April 11, 2006



Pfc. George R. Roehl Jr.
Trp. B, 7th Sqdn., 10th Cav. Regt.
Jan. 24, 1985 - April 11, 2006



Capt. Ian Patrick Weikel
Trp. A, 7th Sqdn., 10th Cav. Regt.
Oct. 7, 1974 - April 18, 2006



Spc. Robert Jason Settle
Co. A, 1st Bn., 66th AR
Oct. 20, 1980 - April 19, 2006



Sgt. Robert William Ehney
Trp. C, 7th Sqdn., 10th Cav. Regt.
July 24, 1979 - April 23, 2006



Spc. Shawn Thomas Lasswell Jr.
Trp. C, 7th Sqdn., 10th Cav. Regt.
July 10, 1984 - April 23, 2006



Cpl. Jason Brent Daniel
HHT, 7th Sqdn., 10th Cav. Regt.
Sept. 26, 1984 - April 23, 2006



Raider Brigade Chaplain corner: *Pecans in the local Cemetary*

By Chaplain (Maj.) Steve Feriante
1st BCT Chaplain

On the outskirts of a small town, there was a big, old pecan tree just inside the cemetery fence.

One day, two boys filled-up a bucket full of nuts and sat down by the tree out of sight and began dividing the nuts.

"One for you, one for me. One for you, one for me," said one boy. Several dropped and rolled down toward the fence.

Another boy came riding along the road on his bicycle. As he passed, he thought he heard voices from inside

the cemetery. He slowed down to investigate. Sure enough, he heard, "One for you, one for me. One for you, one for me."

He just knew what it was. He jumped back on his bike and rode off.

Just around the bend he met an old man with a cane, hobbling along. "Come here quick," said the boy, "you won't believe what I heard. Satan and the Lord are down at the cemetery dividing up the souls."

The man said, "Beat it kid, can't you see it's hard for me to walk."

When the boy insisted, though, the man hobbled slowly to the cemetery. Standing by the fence they heard, "One for you, one for me. One for you, one for me ..."

The old man whispered,

Camp Taji's Warrior Chapel church services

Saturday's

Seventh-Day Adventist - 10:30 a.m.

Sunday's

Liturgical Protestant - 8:30 a.m.

Catholic Mass - 10:00 a.m.

Traditional Protestant - 11:30 a.m.

Latter-Day Saints - 2 p.m.

Contemporary Protestant - 6 p.m.

"Boy, you've been tellin' me the truth. Let's see if we can see the Lord."

Shaking with fear, they peered through the fence, yet were still unable to see anything. The old man and the boy gripped the wrought iron bars of the fence tighter and tighter as they tried to get a glimpse of the Lord.

At last they heard, "One for you, one for me. That's all. Now let's go get those nuts by the fence and we'll be done."

They say the old man made it back to town a full five minutes ahead of the kid on the bike.

Lesson: Don't believe everything you hear.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Brent Hunt

Happy Easter... Chaplain (Capt.) David Fell, 1st STB, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div., performs Easter Services at the Warrior Chapel on Camp Taji as Maj. Daniel Reynolds, communications officer, 1st BCT, reads along, April 16.



Key tasks revalidated this week

— (continued from page 2)

Taji have made this a safe place to reside and work. We all owe the Straight Arrows a debt of gratitude for this work.

Fourth, the Iron Knights of 1-66 Armor continue a tough fight in their area of operation as they operate side by side with the 1st Brigade, 9th Division. Our operation in Tarmiya could not be going any better than it has been to date. Our operation in Mushada is starting to take hold. I welcome the arrival of Bravo Troop, 1-33 Cav to the team. They are working for Lt. Col. Kmiecik and 1-66 – and doing a fantastic job already. In the east, I must recognize Capt. Chad Caldwell and his company's hard work in a huge area. I don't worry much about this area thanks to the work Chad and his Soldiers have done – along with the help of the Macedonian Ranger Platoon.

Finally, the Lancers of 7-10 Cav – as discussed above – have been instrumental in preparing 2/9 Brigade for their assumption of battlespace. This has been a complex, difficult task – but this Iraqi unit is ready for this responsibility due to the dedication of Lt. Col. Thompson and the Lancers. 7-10 Cav has conducted

several successful air assaults recently with 2/9 – seizing multiple insurgents and uncovering an array of IED making material and small arms. Finally, Capt. Ryan Long's efforts in Sabal Bohr have resulted in the formation of a town council, an infusion of essential services projects and a perceived improvement in the security situation by the people of this town.

As you can see – we are doing so many things well. However, I need everyone's help on two areas that we have a problem. First is suicide prevention. Simply put, we've had too many suicides in this brigade. I've directed the battalion commanders to review/update and reinvigorate their respective suicide prevention programs. To every Soldier in the Raider Brigade... if you need a break tell your first line leader. We'll get you the help you need so that you can get back on the team. I've found that things are never as bad as they seem if you talk to someone about it.

The other area we need to work on is sensitive items accountability. We have lost too many sensitive items... especially NVGs. This is NCO business. I'm

tired of this – and have better things to be doing than answering questions to my boss on why we are losing these things. I want our NCOs checking this equipment and ensuring it's secured on our Soldiers.

Starting this week we'll be conducting some revalidation training on key tasks at the section/patrol level. This training will revalidate the standard of performance for PCC/PCI, patrol preparation, react to IED, first aid, point of capture detainee TTP and night vision device operations. These are critical areas that we must all work on... especially the PCC/PCI and patrol prep. This training will make sure

we both succeed in the mission at hand and protect our Soldiers at the same time.

Finally, it's starting to get uncomfortably hot. Time to start drinking water whether you're thirsty or not. Check your buddy here. Uniform standards don't change when it gets hot. I expect the NCOs to be setting the example and enforcing the standards here.

I continue to be proud of you and what you are doing over here in Iraq. It's so much nicer to be here instead of listening to all the babble about Iraq back home. Keep up the great work.

Colonel Jim Pasquaretti
Raider 6



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Brent Hunt

MNC-I DCO visits 1st BCT... Col.

James Pasquaretti, commander, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div., explains how operations in the 1st BCT area of operations is conducted to Italian army Maj. Gen. Alessandro Montuori, deputy commanding general of Multi-National Corps-Iraq at the 1st BCT tactical operations center on Camp Taji April 27. The general was at Camp Taji to visit American, Macedonian and Estonian troops.

Watkins family reunion held at Taji

By Warrant Officer Tom Strazza
Special to the Raider Review

Recently there was a special moment for one family. How often does a father and his two sons have the chance to eat lunch in a combat environment?

Well, that is exactly what took place for the Watkins family. This rare occasion was possible due to the unquestionable patriotism of a father whose sons were fighting the Global War on Terrorism.

Capt. Paul Watkins, 57, has been out of the Army since 1976. He is a 1971 West Point graduate, commissioned as an artillery officer and left active duty as a captain. He spent several years in the Reserves, where he commanded a battery and established himself as a successful businessman. Although he was no longer on active duty, he always continued to look for ways to serve.

In 2003, he joined the Texas National Guard and attained the rank of lieutenant colonel. He worked to develop programs designed around Homeland Security and was later promoted to the rank of colonel where he commanded a brigade.

Staff Sgt. Nate Watkins, who works in military intelligence, is on his first tour in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He has been in the Army for ten years and served in numerous positions spanning the globe. He currently works at the Phoenix Academy on Camp Taji where he is responsible for training incoming personnel who deal with the Iraqi Security Forces.



U.S. Army photo by Warrant Officer Tom Strazza

From left, Capt. Zach Watkins, Capt. Paul Watkins and Staff Sgt. Nate Watkins reunited at Camp Taji, recently. The father, Paul, joined the Army after a 30-year hiatus to help the country in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Capt. Zach Watkins, a 2002 graduate of West Point, is serving his second tour in support of OIF with the 4th Battalion, 42nd Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division. Currently, he works with the battalion's military transition team training soldiers in an Iraqi armored battalion.

The beginning of the story takes place in November 2005 while at a barbecue; Paul told his youngest son Zach he was getting back in the Army to which Zach replied, "What Army?"

With that, Paul worked diligently to regain entry into the Army. Even after 30 years of absence, the Army was more than willing to accept such a patriotic citizen.

At the time, Nate and Zach did not know they would be co-located at Camp Taji; however, shortly thereafter circumstances unfolded and the brothers realized they would link-up. Jokingly, they wondered if their father would also be joining them.

After going through all the

necessary steps to rejoin the Army, the brothers learned their dad would be stationed at Camp Victory. He currently works with the Army's Rapid Equipping Force.

Paul's first assignment was to brief the 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div. commander on the capabilities of the REF, and the location was Camp Taji.

So, the three of them sat down together for lunch. The dining facility quickly transitioned into the Watkins family dinner table, where the two brothers argued while their father mediated.

Paul said, "This is quite amusing actually. It reminds me of when they were younger. It's good to see some things haven't changed."

When asked about his fathers dedication to duty, Zach said, "I think it serves as an example that patriotism is alive and well in the United States. I am, however, curious to see his officer record brief and his date of rank. I think he might be the oldest captain in the Army."

Saab al Bour getting extreme makeover from locals, Coalition

By Sgt. 1st Class Brent Hunt
Editor, Raider Review

A small community north of Baghdad is getting an extreme makeover with the help of the Iraqi army and Multi-National Division-Baghdad Soldiers Sunday.

In a continuing effort to make Iraq a better place to live, the Al Jwahiri High School in Saab al Bour, Iraq, held its grand opening ceremony and future city projects were announced by local officials.

"We are here to help the people of this community with the help of the Americans and members of the community," said Iraqi army 1st Lt. Firas Abbas, 2nd Tank Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division. "The American



U.S. Army photo by Maj. David Olson

The Al Jwahiri High School in Saab al Bour, Iraq, held its grand opening April 23. The high school and The Taha Hussien Primary School, also in Saab al Bour, have undergone \$790,000 worth of refurbishing.

side is very important, because they make the people feel safe.

"Whether it's rebuilding something

in the city or medics on hand, we [Iraqis] see that they [MND-B

(go to page 10, city)

1/9 IA, 1BCT conducts OPN Bold Action

By Maj. David Olson
1st BCT PAO

The 1st Mechanized Brigade, 9th Iraqi Army Division with 1st Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment, 1st Bde. Combat Team, 4th Infantry Div. conducted Operation Bold Action recently to search for weapons caches near Tarmiya north of Baghdad.

Soldiers from the Iraqi army and the U.S. Army lined-up to begin the operation early in the morning and

searched for weapons caches near the Tigris River the entire day.

"The purpose of the operation was to provide more security near Tarmiya by chasing the terrorists," said Iraqi Col. Saad Abu Mohammed, the deputy commander, 1st Mech. Bde., 9th IA Div. "This is one of the most dangerous areas where terrorists are located."

"There is a deterrent aspect of this," said U.S. Army Maj. Bill Taylor, deputy team chief, 1st Mech. Bde., 9th IA Div. Military Transition Team. "This operation shows that we are out here."



U.S. Army photo by Maj. David Olson

Pfc. Josh Kendrick, infantryman, Co. C, 1st Bn., 66th AR, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div., launches a Raven to provide area reconnaissance during Operation Bold Action near Tarmiya north of Baghdad, recently.

Coalition forces finish repairing Irarreyah Girls School in Taji

By Spc. C. Terrell Turner
Staff Writer

As new facilities and resources are being set-up to help the Iraqi government stand on its own, Coalition Forces and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers still focus on smaller projects around the area to provide support for local communities.

The Irarreyah Girls School of Shat Al Taji received repairs to improve the facility. With the help of a local nahia and civil affairs, a contractor made repairs and additions to the school.

On April 12 Fred Nightengale, resident engineer on Camp Taji, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers visited the school to take a look at the renovations. Nightengale has been in Iraq for almost a year working on various projects.

"Basically we did the construction management for the contract," he said. "Our mission was to rehab the building, build two classrooms, paint, repair the roof, repair tiles and fix the windows. We came along with the brigade to inspect the work."

During the visit, a local sheik along with Ministry of Education officials met with Lt. Col. John Cross, commander, 1st Special Troops Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, to discuss the future of the school and the relationship of the community with



U.S. Army photo by Spc. C. Terrell Turner

Students raise their hand to answer questions from their teacher at the Irarreyah Girls School in Shat Al Taji. Coalition forces and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recently finished renovating and repairing the school with the help of the local nahia.

Coalition Forces.

The local nahia voted to approve the work, went to the Iraqi government for final approval and hired the contractors to perform the work. The project started in December and was conducted while the school remained open.

"It was a chore trying to get the work done with classes in session," said Nightengale. "But they appreciated the work. There was a lot of stuff that needed to be done."

For the Iraqis, helping the community is very important.

"Most of the contractors were very interested in helping the community," said Nightengale. "They donated extra items and work to help out in the community."

The small local all-girls school educates approximately 360 girls

from the area in basic knowledge skills and Islamic fundamentals.

"We teach them the Islamic Religion and about new developments in the world," said School Headmistress Rushed. "We work to make sure they are good girls and start their lives as good mothers or helping their communities."

The school is especially crucial to the community, because it offers more than an initial start in the educational careers of the students.

"The school is very important, because it is the only school that serves the people in the area," said Rushed. "We teach first grade to ninth grade. I'm very happy for the project, because it helps the students. The public is thankful for the help of the Coalition Forces who were a part of this project."

Tarmiya Qada conducts ground breaking medical wing ceremony

By Maj. David Olson
1st BCT PAO

Members of the Tarmiya Qada [city council] conducted a short ceremony to mark the beginning of a project to build another wing onto the Tarmiya medical clinic north of Baghdad, recently.

Eight Qada members watched a front-end loader break ground on the project to add a new operating room and a birthing room to the Tarmiya medical clinic. The



U.S. Army photo by Maj. David Olson

Sheik Saeed Jassim Hameed Al-Mashadani, the Qada chairman, surrounded by the other members of the Tarmiya Qada as they break ground on a new wing to the Tarmiya medical clinic, recently. The new wing will contain an operating room and a birthing room. The project is scheduled to be completed Sept. 1.

project valued at \$200,000 is scheduled for completion Sept. 1. A local construction

company is contracted to build the new wing, which means the money will

remain in the local area to boost the economy as local citizens do the work.

“Great things are happening here. I want to improve the city,” said Sheik Saeed Jassim Hameed Al-Mashadani, the Qada leader. “I want these projects to get started, so the city can prosper.”

“The people are now happier with the security situation. What’s next is making the medical center bigger,” Sheik Jassim continued. “We’ll add an operating room and a birthing room. We are also building roads in addition to other projects for the city.”

Army chief visits 9th Iraqi Army Div., Taji

By Maj. David Olson
1st BCT PAO

The chief of staff of the U.S. Army visited the 9th Iraqi Army Division April 19 to conduct strategic and operational assessments of security operations north of Baghdad.

Soldiers from the 9th IA Div. displayed their armored vehicles for Gen. Peter Schoomaker to

inspect during his visit to Camp Taji.

Iraqi Army Maj. Gen. Ayoub Bashar led Schoomaker through the vehicles describing their capabilities and fielding questions.

Lt. Gen. Martin Dempsey, commanding general, Multi-National Security Transition Command – Iraq, and Brig. Gen. Daniel Bolger, commanding general, Coalition Military Assistance Transition Team, were also present.



U.S. Army photo by Maj. David Olson

Gen. Peter Schoomaker, chief of staff, U.S. Army, visits Camp Taji and receives a guided tour of the 9th IA Div., April 19.

After seeing the Iraqi army vehicles, Schoomaker ate lunch at an Iraqi army

dining facility with the Military Transition Team advisors to the 9th IA Div.

City set for \$2.95 million in renovations

— (continued from page 7)

Soldiers] are here to help,” Abbas added. “When the kids and families feel safe and secure, then it makes learning much easier for the children.”

The Al Jwahiri High School and the Taha Hussien Primary School, also in Saab al Bour, have undergone \$790,000 of repairs to refurbish the schools’ foundations and walls. In addition, Iraqi and MND-B Soldiers brought in a truckload of donated books, pens and paper.

“This school is making a difference in the community with our youth,” said Hussain Ali, a math teacher at the school. “A proper education is essential to our student’s future and the future of all of Iraq. They [Saab al Bour citizens] feel that with the cooperation between the Americans and the Iraqis, the people will feel more comfortable. That will show them the Americans and Iraqis are interested in making things good.”

Not only has the school benefited from sweeping reconstruction efforts, an Iraqi officer and an American public affairs officer were on hand to announce future plans for the city to members of the Iraqi media.

“The Iraqi army brigade with Coalition forces will be



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Brent Hunt

An American Soldier hands out goodies to the children massed in front of the Al Jwahiri High School at its grand opening ceremony on April 23 in Saab al Bour. The school along with the Taha Hussien Primary School, also in Saab al Bour, underwent \$790,000 worth of major renovations by refurbishing the schools’ foundations and walls. The city has already went through more than \$1.95 million in renovations and is scheduled to receive \$2.95 million in city upgrades in the near future.

fixing problems in the city,” said Iraqi army Maj. Jabar Moshurem, executive officer for the 1st Tank Battalion, 2nd Tank Bde., 9th Iraqi Army Div. “We have three projects with electrical power, we are fixing roads in the town and we are building a medical clinic soon.”

Currently, Saab al Bour residents have already benefited from \$182,000 of electrical supplies, \$790,000 of school repairs and \$980,000 of water treatment and storage.

In the near future, residents can expect work to continue. In May, two electrical projects costing a

total of \$2.95 million will begin. The first project will repair and expand the current 11 kilovolt line in Saab al Bour in order to provide all residents with a more reliable power source. The second project, a 33 kilovolt line, will provide further protection and reliability to the cities electrical grid. Two additional water projects costing \$2.6 million will be completed in October. Finally, an additional \$488,000 will be used to improve the schools. These educational improvements should be completed by August.

“A few weeks ago we

organized a meeting with the sheiks from both factions [Sunni and Shia] of Saab al Bour to bring them together with the Iraqi army, the Iraqi police and the Coalition forces leadership to get to know one another to establish relationships,” said Maj. David Olson, 1st Bde. Combat Team, 4th Infantry Div. public affairs officer. “This way in the future when problems exist, we could work together to work them out. The main purpose of the meeting was to begin building a city council, so they can solve their own problems by working with each other.”

BDLT: Taking care of business

By Capt. Douglas Wilbur
4th Bn., 42nd FA Regt.

Any Soldier who has served on guard or in a tower or any other security point on Camp Taji knows who the Base Defense Liaison Team is and what they do. The BDLT is a handpicked group of non-commissioned who strive everyday to keep Camp Taji safe. You may have seen them walking around the camp with their armbands identifying them as part of the 4th Battalion, 42nd Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division.

The team is primarily responsible for ensuring daily compliance with force protection standards and policies. They verify Soldiers performing force protection duties are advised of the latest information and alert them of any anti-Iraqi forces activity. The services provided by the BDLT are just one more step the Straight Arrows of 4th Bn., 42nd FA Regt. take to ensure tenants of Camp Taji are safe and can effectively perform their missions.

Every day the BDLT



U.S. Army photo by Capt. Douglas Wilbur

Soldiers from the 4th Bn., 42nd FA Regt., 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div., who are part of the Base Defense Liaison Team, are responsible for ensuring the daily compliance of force protection standards.

performs a series of random checks covering the security of every part of the camp and the operations occurring on it. They leave no rock unturned and are always looking for ways to improve security.

According to Staff Sgt. David Rivera of the BDLT, "It is our focus to enforce standards and perform checks to ensure every one is doing their job as expected."

One of BDLT's key tasks is to verify all civilian personnel have legitimate badges and are displaying

them properly. The BDLT makes sure everyone on force protection understands the system and knows what to do if there is a discrepancy.

Another task the BDLT performs is identifying and correcting shortcomings in the physical security structures of the camp, such as the wall and the towers. These barriers create a formidable obstacle preventing the AIF from gaining access to the camp. When shortcomings are identified, they work with other personnel to quickly find proper solutions.

The NCOs on the BDLT work behind the scenes and often maintain a low profile. Being out of the spot light is exactly the way the BDLT likes to operate. They measure success on a daily basis. Every quiet day on the camp is a smashing victory for them.

Staff Sgt. Ricky Nicks said, "My favorite part of the job is knowing I help create a safe environment for our troops and civilians on the FOB [forward operating base]."

Luckily, for the rest of us, they do their job very well.

School playground equipment, jungle gym donated by U.S, Iraqi companies

(continued from page 1)

Company A, 490th Civil Affairs Battalion attached to the 7th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division.

Putting the playground together took about four-days of hard work with workers enduring an array of weather from intense Middle East heat to a hail storm. Children from the school volunteered to help everyday, just so they would have a nice place to play.

"I am very excited about this playground at my school," said Basam, 12, who wears a Los Angeles Dodgers hat and says he learned how to speak English from American Soldiers. "I have helped the Americans every day, because I can't wait for it to be finished. I'm very tired, though."

Building the playground took a lot of sweat and hard work, but that did not stop a National Guardsman, who is scheduled to leave Iraq in 12 days and has been with the project since



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Brent Hunt

Maj. Jeff Pugh, civil affairs officer for Co. A, 490th Civil Affairs Bn. attached to 7th Sqdn., 10th Cav. Regt., 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div. helps Iraqi children put gravel all over their new playground at the Al Shrooq Primary and Secondary School in Taji April 19.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Brent Hunt

From left, Master Sgt. Ronnie Reece, civil affairs non-commissioned officer in charge of Co. A, 490th Civil Affairs Bn. attached to 7th Sqdn., 10th Cav. Regt., 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div., Iraqi children of the school, the school's headmaster and Sgt. Lucas Murray, who is a landscape architect from Boston, Mass., with Co. D, 3rd Bn., 172nd Inf. Regt., with the Rhode Island National Guard pose for a picture after the playground at the Al Shrooq Primary and Secondary School in Taji was completed April 19.

the beginning.

"I saw an article about how BigToys had donated one of these jungle gyms to someplace here in the Middle East, so that got the wheels in my head turning," said Sgt. Lucas Murray, a landscape architect from Boston, Mass., who is assigned to Co. D, 3rd Bn., 172nd Inf. Regt. which is part of the Rhode Island National Guard. "I called BigToys and asked if they wouldn't mind donating some playground equipment here. Long story short, nine months later, here we are putting together something wonderful.

"The kids have been great, and they've really worked hard," Murray added. "Hopefully, we taught them a lesson because if you work hard, in the end, you get something great."

Not only did the kids work hard,

but Soldiers from the Iraqi army and Multi-National Division - Baghdad Soldiers pitched in as well.

"When I saw everyone helping out, I couldn't help but start shoveling," said Jasim Abed a 2nd Tank Bde., 9th Iraqi Army Div. soldier who was at the school providing security. "I think this is something really great for these kids."

"This really makes you feel good giving them something they can enjoy," said Sgt. Gerardo Garcia, personal security detachment for 1st Special Troops Battalion, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div. "We are rotating shifts, so we can help out. I like helping out with something the kids will enjoy."

When everything was said and done the playground looked like any playground you would see in any part of the world, just kids having fun.